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A WOOD CARVER'S HOME.

IN one of the suburbs of Cincinnati, high enough on a steep hillside to command a distant view of the Ohio up and down, stands an unpretending house, not differing externally from thousands of others, but adorned within with a taste and skill in the highest degree creditable to its owner and chief decorator, Mr. Benn Pitman, who has acquired an enviable reputation as one of the leading promoters in this country of the beautiful art of wood-carving. The house is approached from an arched gateway by a winding path, overhung with trees and bordered by flowering plants. At a bend in this path stands a walnut bench, carved in a simple style which happily distinguishes it from the ordinary rustic seat. The house, a plain frame structure with a central gable, is built against the side of the hill which seems to have had a slice dug out to accommodate it. A flight of steps leads up to the veranda of the second floor which introduces the home, the large room on the first floor being a sort of workshop, out of which the artistic part of the house has been evolved. Along the slender frame work of the veranda runs a light tracery, and as the eye wanders here and there, following the designs which change as if the worker had idly yielded to any vein of fancy, it is led to the window frames, each of which shows some corresponding decoration as easily and incidentally wrought out. This happy want of effort has a great charm, since, however trivial in its character the ornament may be, it is always inspired by good taste, and knowledge, and is always worthy of curious regard. A door with an oval panel leads directly from the veranda into the sitting-room. This door is the plainest in the house. Its oval panel is of plate glass and incloses, like a picture, the magnificent view without, as if to give to nature one last superb chance.

The first striking feature of the sitting-room is the wall, which is rough-plastered and painted with a sort of mottled grays, warm and sunny as grays may be and suggesting cloud-like effects with depths in perspective. Springing up from the base-board is a



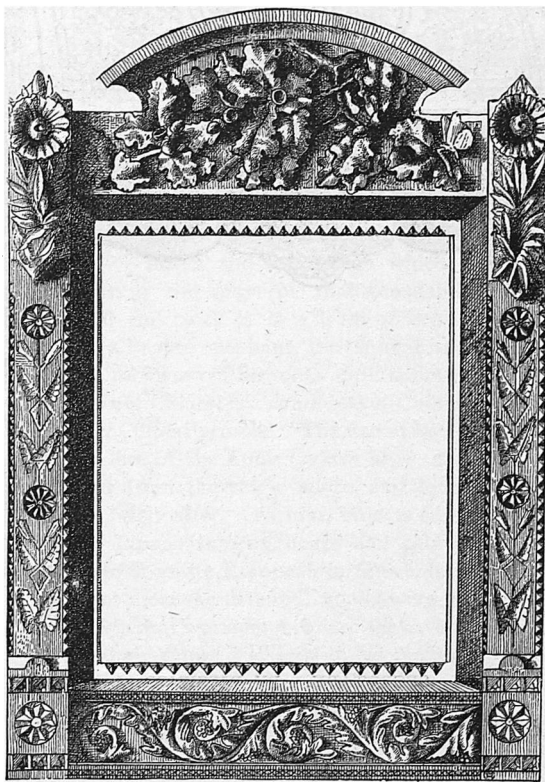
BLACK WALNUT WASHSTAND.
IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

garden of flowers—hollyhocks, luxuriant yellow roses, and great stalks of purple iron weed with changing foliage of yellow and brown. In one corner a sunflower stands guard. From a doorway is thrown a branch of scarlet japonica and a rift of sunshine. This work was done by Mrs. Keenan, the design being taken, brush in hand, from glimpses in midsummer out of the window, and rapidly worked out in oils. The handling is very broad, and notwithstanding the accuracy of the drawing of the natural growths and the realism at which the artist has aimed, the result is in a marked degree decorative, and highly suggestive of the way in which the Japanese work. Some of the color effects are very fine, especially the blending of the purples and golds of the iron weed against the background.

The wood-work of the room (doors, facings and mantel) is of black walnut luxuriously carved. All the ornament below a certain height is in low relief, amounting on the baseboards to little more than a delicate tracery. This is for its own protection. The dining-room door illustrates this. On the stiles, ornamented with hemp and lilies, the carving is sunk and is in no danger from scratching, rubbing or other rough treatment; the upper and smaller panels, on the contrary, are in high relief, and the capitals and top decorations are brought out much more boldly. The doors are all worthy of description. The sitting-room door, which is given, is of black walnut. The distribution of the ornament of the pilasters—the swamp rose and Maximilian sunflower—it will be seen corresponds to that of the base, shaft, and capital of a pillar. The lower panels are incised work, while the upper panels, ornamented with the buckeye, are two

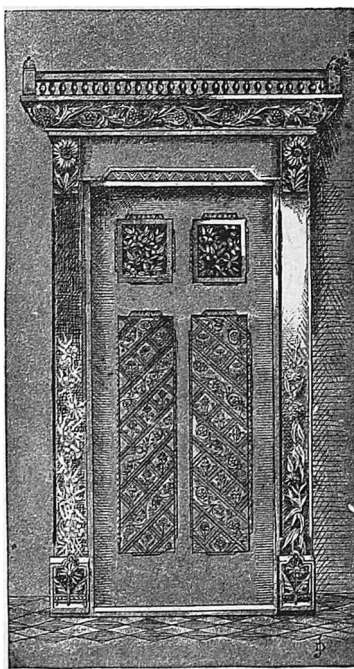
inches in relief. Above the richly carved cornice, suggestive of Byzantine ornament, is a shelf for pottery.

The ornamentation throughout is floral, and the motives are from a hundred varied sources. The ethics of Mr. Pitman's work and teaching rest on beauty and sincerity. The grotesque fancies of the Renaissance he does not admit, and, restricting himself



OAK PICTURE-FRAME.
IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

and his pupils to floral ornament, for reasons which to many people might appear transcendental, he has been obliged to find new forms. Any one at all familiar with the flora of the Ohio valley will recognize how liberally Mr. Pitman has drawn upon it, and how fruitful it has been. In the door of a music cabinet, for instance, the white oleander, which is realistically treated in the central panel, is conventionalized in the border in rosettes. This is a favorite treatment as the dining-room door and the oak frame (shown herewith),



SITTING-ROOM DOOR.
IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

both illustrate—the ornament of the dining-room door being carried on to the dado in its conventionalized form.

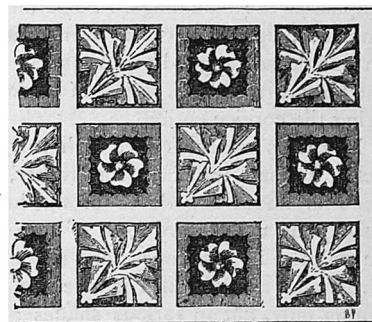
In the mantel, which is also shown, the leaves of the wild parsnep and the succory, cut in high relief, support the shelf, and prove to be no mean rivals of the acanthus. Both of these, as an examination of the

cuts will show, are often used by Mr. Pitman. In the mullions, ferns make the decoration, their plume-like effects giving a graceful finish. The pilasters of the mantel, it will be observed, are treated like the sitting-room door, the decorations corresponding to the divisions of a pillar. The two lower panels of the mantel which frame the mirror are painted in autumn foliage, while the two upper panels, representing spring and winter, are in silver bronze. Above the panels are small shelves for vases.

Sincerity in construction is a marked characteristic of Mr. Pitman's work. The elegant rosewood table so handsomely carved is solid rosewood, as you discover if you attempt to move it. The ebony cabinet is ebony throughout. These rare woods appear in charming form in the smaller articles, made by Mr. Pitman himself that the construction might be first worthy the ornament.

It is impossible to trace in its many forms the decoration which is carried through the sitting-room, including the piano with its bands of ornament, the work of Miss Agnes Pitman. One might readily imagine that a plain board amid such profusion of ornament would be a restful and welcome object. This is not the case, however, for the ornament has been so subordinated that it finds its way to the eye slowly, rather than takes it suddenly captive.

Directly behind the sitting-room is the dining-room, scarcely half its size. Being in the centre of the house and backed against the side of the hill there is no opportunity for windows, and the room is lighted by small ground glass panels placed directly beneath the ceiling, north and south, and making a sort of frieze. On the other sides the same forms are repeated in paint. The dining-room walls, the work of Miss Lizzie Nourse, are painted in much the same style that Mrs. Keenan has adopted in the sitting-room, with the difference that Miss Nourse's work is more distinctly pictorial. The background is a cloud-like effect with flowers springing up from the base-board. The principal object on the north side is an old gnarled apple-tree in bloom, whose branches embrace the entire wall. On the sides where the panels are indicated in



END PANEL OF WASHSTAND.
IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

paint a trumpet-vine is made to wander in and hang down, and birds are hovering near, as if scarce daring to enter for stray crumbs. The idea, it will be seen, is very pleasing, as the table appears to be set in a bower in which the flowers are always in bloom and the sky always sunny.

The small size of the dining-room has given rise to many ingenious contrivances. A sideboard would be altogether impossible. Instead there are two sets of hanging shelves which do a great part of its duties. These shelves are masses of exquisite carving, and are in themselves beautiful ornaments. Suspended from little brass hooks swing gayly painted cups, and ranged beneath, on one set of shelves, secured by mouldings along the edges, stands the dinner service, each object of which has been made beautiful in one way or another. On the other set of shelves are placed the glass and silver, whose shining surfaces would delight a housewife's eye. Double doors lead to the library. The door frames of walnut are ingeniously used for household service by broadening at the height of the dado, and being transformed into drawers which contain cutlery and silver. The mechanical arrangement of the dining-room may offer suggestions to people who have but little room, since it really holds everything necessary for the most elaborately appointed meals, and yet within a space which would discourage an ordinary architect.

In the library the walls are a gray-green, rough-plastered, and are traversed by narrow walnut mouldings on which is carved a slight vine-like ornament. On the ceilings these meet in four heavy beams, forming a rectangular figure. Here one reads the several legends, "With malice toward none, with charity for

all," from Mr. Lincoln's second inaugural; "Do all the good you can and say nothing about it," taken from Dickens's speech to the Winchester boys, and "Respect the burden," which is ascribed to the first Napoleon. The principal book-case, shown in the illustration, is of a special design and intended for special needs. The framework is mahogany, and the panels ebony, and

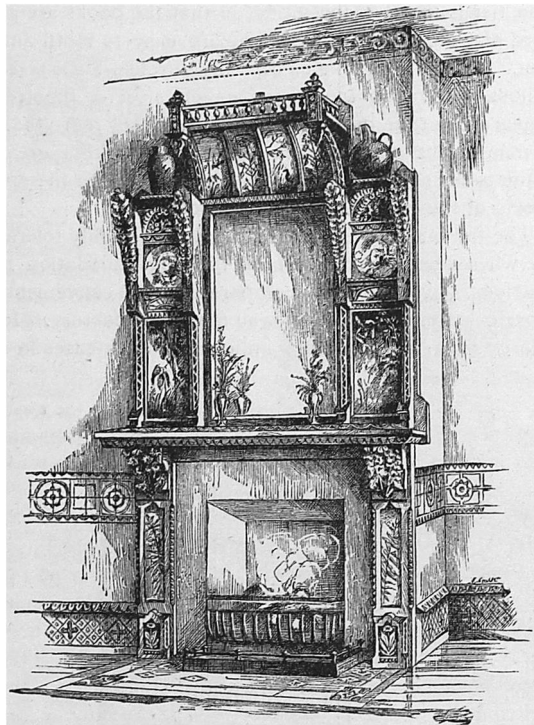
will be, each stone being paid for before it is laid. To this house, when finished, the carved wood-work described above will be transferred, and will help to complete one of the most artistic homes on the Ohio.

MARY GAY HUMPHREYS.

CONCERNING BOOK-CASES.

THERE are book-cases and book-cases, just as there are books and books. There is the richly-carved cabinet, with its inlaid panels, its elaborate brass, its silken curtains, its beveled glass, its chamois-covered shelves, its tough back carefully protected against damp, all uniting to perfect a fit tabernacle for priceless volumes, so old, so rare, so beautifully bound as to be absolutely too precious for human creatures' daily food. There is the single board held against the side of a shanty by a bit of string and a nail or two and supporting a worn Emerson, an old copy of Franklin, a cheap Shakespeare and two or three volumes of Cooper, Scott or Longfellow, battered and worn—and yet far more highly prized by their owner than any bibliophile's treasure which he loves selfishly, merely as the miser loves his gold. And between these two extremes are numberless intermediate varieties. There is the sober row of books filling the top of the mantel-piece—a bad place for books as the warped backs and cracking covers reveal only too soon. There is the first attempt at a book-case, the box once filled with soap or wine, now planed and stained and divided in two by a transverse partition, which serves as a shelf, and with the bottom and the top gives accommodation for three rows of books; this primitive device is not to be despised, for it will afford shelf-room for quite fifty volumes, two thirds of which are inside the box and are thus always ready to move and easy to handle. In a country with a population as nomadic as ours, any book-case, however elementary, which holds books as well in one place as another, and as well when moving from one place to another as when settled, and which saves all trouble of packing before transport and of rearrangement afterward, is not without its good points; and there are many worse ways of providing for books than a combination—by means of a few screws—of half a dozen such boxes into a large stand. If sets of these boxes were placed back to back they might do service as a screen to divide a

than a yard in length, are united by thin but strong iron rods which bend back at the top to hook over nails on the wall. A large-sized set of these hanging shelves will accommodate two or three hundred volumes; and even a smaller set will afford room for a full hundred. These shelves are symmetrical and graceful; they can



SITTING-ROOM MANTEL.

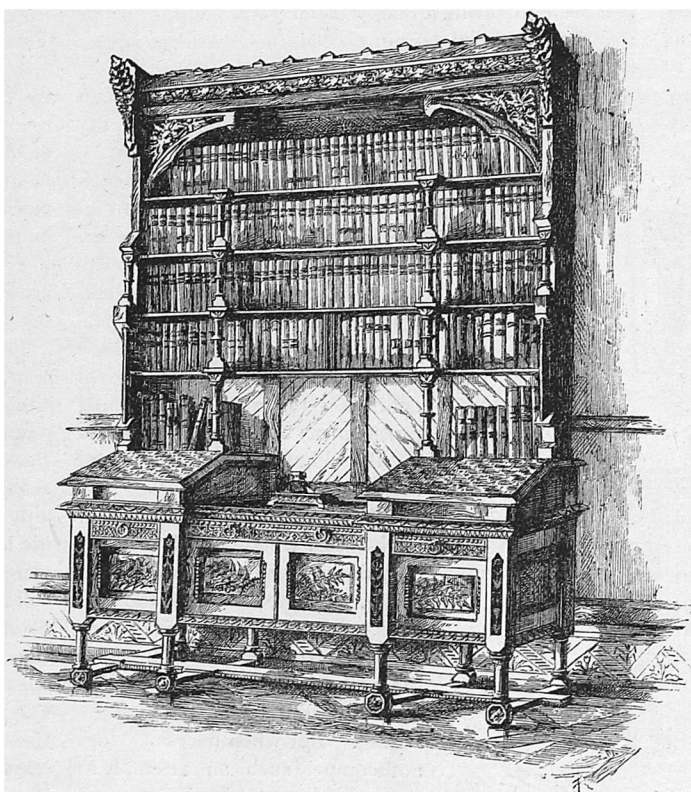
IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

the ornamentation is so clearly indicated that it requires no description. The sides of the bay-window are also utilized for bookshelves with that strict economy of space which has contrived "infinite riches in little room." The edge of each shelf and the uprights are all lightly cut in a continuous stem and leaf design. This repeated mention of carving may seem wearisome to the reader, but the ornament itself appears always as a pleasant surprise, and is apparently as accidental and varied as if it had been suggested by some spray or curious twist of leaf seen outside of the window. Indeed, in all the ornamentation of the Pitman house the great charm is not so much in its abundance as in the new forms and in the pleasure of seeing old forms turned to new uses.

There is a vein of poetical fancy and sentiment blended with much of the work which a chance observer might not appreciate, since it lies chiefly in associations, but which must be a constant source of pleasure to the inmates. A mahogany bedstead is one of the most elaborately carved pieces in the house. One feature of this carving is a number of small panels, on each one of which is a small flower in high relief, which has been copied from some one of the wild flowers which it was Mrs. Pitman's pleasure to seek in the woods and transplant into her own grounds. In other parts of the bedstead the foliage, flowers, and birds make a wild tangle almost three inches in relief, showing some of the most skilful work in the house. In the same room is a washstand whose ornament is appropriately taken from aquatic plants.

To speak in general of the ornamentation of this house, it is characterized, first, by its refinement; second, by the new motives taken directly from the great sources of ornament, and proving how inexhaustible these are, and, third, by the way in which these are used, in actual copies of the flower and plant, and again in their conventionalized forms.

Immediately back of the house, on a higher ledge, rises a lofty and imposing stone mansion whose walls are scarcely half way up. This is Mr. Pitman's future home, now several years in process of erection, since the work goes on upon a plan as novel as its interior

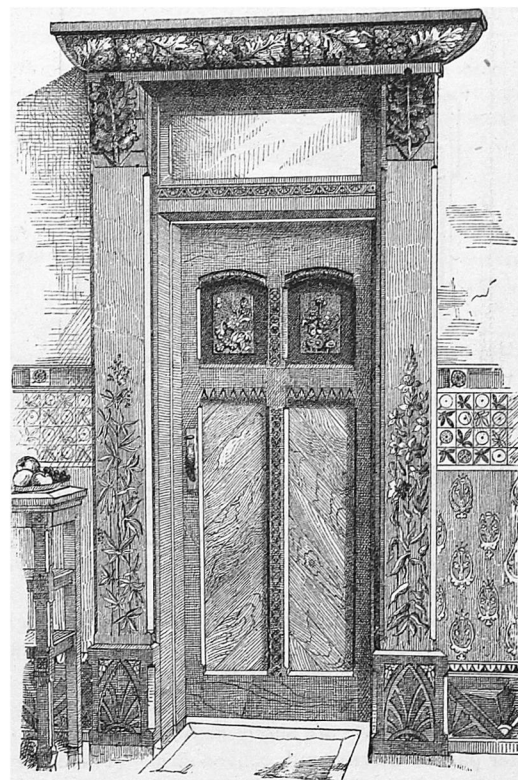


MAHOGANY BOOK-CASE.

IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

room or to form an alcove before a window—an alcove which could be utilized as the study of a minister or lawyer or journalist hard pressed for space.

Almost as simple as this improvised book-case and perhaps better suited to most tastes, are the sets of hanging shelves now to be found in nearly all book-stores. Three, four or five light wood shelves, less



DINING-ROOM DOOR.

IN MR. PITMAN'S HOUSE AT CINCINNATI.

be packed in a very small space, and they can be put together in a very short time. In many houses there are not more books than will fill a set of these hanging shelves; and even in houses where there is a library with an abundance of books, there are likely to be members of the family who own and cherish their individual collections of volumes which they can hang on the walls of their own rooms under their own eyes. More ample than these hanging shelves are the so-called "Eastlake Portable Book-cases," which stand four or five feet high from the floor and hold five or six shelves, three or four feet long. They will accommodate perhaps twice as many volumes as the largest set of hanging shelves; and as they stand solidly and firmly on the floor, they may be laden safely with heavy tomes which one might not be willing to trust to the more fragile hanging shelves.

When a greater collection of books has been got together than can be stored comfortably in one or two of these simple and ready-made book-cases, the collector begins to feel that he has something worthy of being called a library, and he is likely to seek to house it more luxuriously. In all probability a separate room is set apart for the literary treasures, and this room is called the library, and its walls are more or less lined with book-cases made to order. And here we are met at once with the question as to whether the book-cases ought to have doors or not. There is great diversity of opinion among experts. The manufacturer of the Eastlake Portable Book-case has solved the question to his satisfaction by doing without doors. The ordinary maker of ready-made furniture solves the question to his satisfaction in turn by offering for sale a book-case with glass doors. And the collector of bibliographic curiosities solves it anew also to his satisfaction by hiding his treasures in a book-case with wooden

doors, seeking in vain to keep out the light which fades and the dust which destroys. There are those who have open shelves adorned with a pendent fringe of leather or cloth. There are those again who have doors of open frame-work filled with wire netting.

Which is the best of these many arrangements, it is not easy to declare; and yet a search for the reason